

TOWN OF EAST GRANBY

INCORPORATED 1858

EAST GRANBY, CONNECTICUT 06026

OFFICE OF FIRST SELECTMAN

PHONE (860) 653-2576 FAX (860) 653-4017

February 14, 2017

Testimony on HB7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2019 AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFORE, as it relates to the State Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP).

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee;

I am writing to you today regarding several troublesome components of HB7027. Shifting education dollars and other state aid away from a small town like East Granby will have a devastating effect on our 5200 residents. East Granby would lose \$1.2 million in state aid or a reduction of 55%. To cover this loss of aid, our town would have raise property taxes by almost 8% in FY18 and 7% in FY19. This translates to an extra \$620 in FY18 real estate taxes for the average East Granby homeowner who pays \$5900 annually.

On top of this enormous impact, we would also be required to pick up 100% of the Resident Trooper Program. In the current year, our 85% share of the program is \$139,347. A 100% share would become \$163,938 (not accounting for any raises) or an increase of \$24,591. While that may not seem like a lot of money, let me put it in the context of a small town. Our entire General Government (town side) budget this year is \$4,613,000. The impact of the increase in the Resident Trooper Program would be one half of one percent on our total budget before you account for rising health insurance and utility costs.

I am a firm believer in the Resident Trooper Program but escalating costs since 2014 have caused us to reduce our complement of two troopers to one trooper. We augment the State Police with six town police officers. There are tangible benefits to keeping the Resident Trooper Program but it's getting more difficult to maintain especially at 100% of the cost.

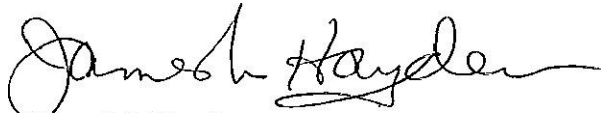
Please note:

- With increasing State Police costs, our budget may not be able to support 100% replacement coverage of local police officer shift vacancies. If this was the case, East Granby would have to rely on the State Patrol Trooper who covers a vast amount of highway north of Hartford all the way to the Massachusetts line. The geography that the Patrol Trooper covers includes several state facilities and six prisons.

- Program and coverage decisions driven by increasing costs will add to emergency response times here in East Granby. Response times can also be impacted if our resident trooper has to leave town to cover an emergency in another resident trooper town or on the highway and then return for a service call in East Granby.
- East Granby is proud of the high-quality service provided by the Resident Trooper Program, one of the first regional shared service programs. As a “customer of the State Police we want to remain partners in creating safe communities but additional costs are impacting our ability to maintain our public safety efforts.

From a practical perspective, resident trooper towns offset millions of dollars of cost for the State of Connecticut. It would be unfortunate if rising costs forced the towns to reduce their number of resident troopers and then placed the full expense burden of those troopers back onto the state government and the state budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "James M. Havden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Havden".

James M. Havden
First Selectman